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**The Word “Fat” and its Connotations**

The word “fat” is a very commonly used word in today’s 2008 society. But truly, what does fat really mean? Well, there’s the literal definition, and also the medical definition—“to be plump, overweight”, and this term of “overweight” is determined by a body-mass index (BMI) scale, but the word fat goes so much further beyond this medical definition for many people, and the doctors diagnoses to overweight people—“fat” is a word of insult, used by catty young girls frequently, it is a criticism used by the media, especially celebrity tabloids, magazine ads, commercials, and even television shows, and lastly, “fat” is a term of hurtfulness. No more than 50 years ago, fat was simply a medical definition, but somewhere within the last decades, the simple word alone has transformed completely in meaning.

Less than fifty years ago, Marilyn Monroe was considered to be the classic beauty of the time period, and she still is. She was the envy of all young women, and her high status placed her at one of the most desirable women in the world at that time period. However, fast forwarding 50 or so years—Marilyn Monroe would be about a size 8, if not larger, by today’s standards, a size that is never considered for a woman of being so desirable. Yet, people still find her to be a classic beauty today. The truth is, however, if Marilyn Monroe was living today, and was an actress in today’s society, she would be hounded by the media and the celeb tabloids that she is “too fat”, and “needs to shed a few pounds”, being suggested diet and weight loss programs, even diet pills that supposedly “work”. This one example of Marilyn Monroe, among many, including Audrey Hepburn, and other former classic beauty’s, show how drastically society has changed their perceptions of “fat” and “skinny”, and defining beauty by this. It is noted that today, all the lists of “The 99 Most Desirable Women”, and many other lists of the sort, all these “desirable women” are probably no more than a size 5. But what has caused this drastic change in the meaning of the word “fat”? Why is it such a common word in today’s world?

The media takes much of the blame and responsibility for redefining the connotations of this now commonly used word. For one example, the modeling agency and the effect that they have on teens—“Americas Next Top Model” is one of many extremely popular shows that shows young girls and their rise to fame, however, it is very critical of girls and their weight. They are looking for only the skinniest girls, and girls that are above a certain weight are criticized, and told they will not be able to make it far in the modeling industry. Many other examples exist on television such as this as well—in popular reality shows, only “skinny” girls are shown, often times the heroine in movies is the pretty, thin girl, in many commercials and ads in magazines, the only “fat girls” that exist are for weight loss commercials or ads. The media strives on this newfound idea of “fat”. And the worst—celebrity tabloids. The magazines—People, US, Star, and more—pick apart celebrities, even in their everyday lives, stating who appears to have gained even a few pounds, and many girls aspire after these celebrities. However, when young girls’ on television shows, in the media, etc. are being picked apart for their weight (when they most likely are no more than 120 pounds in the first place), girls feel the need to do this too.

The effects of the media, the tabloids, etc. are strong, especially on young teens. Many cases of anorexia and bulimia, serious eating disorders, are rising, because young girls that are even as small as a size 0, or less, are convinced that they are fat, because of this new definition of the word, defined by the media. This new definition of the word also has created many self-esteem problems for girls, especially, and the problems also seem to be mounting, and all because of this one word, “fat”, and the new definitions within the past couple of decades of the one word.

Fat has transformed in the past fifty years: It used to only be a medical definition, but now, it means so much more—it is a concept of worry for an extreme number of young girls, it is a hurtful word, and it is a reality that is feared for many. The media is largely to blame for this epidemic of the fear of the word “fat”, because of the reality television shows showing primarily skinny girls, as well as many commercials, ads in magazines, etc. The effects that this has had on especially very young teenage girls is hurtful and often times a bit brutal, even resulting in severe eating disorders when girls that are around 110 pounds think that they are fat. It is shocking for many, and a sad fact, about the connotations of the word “fat” and the grave effects that it has had on society, within only the past few decades.